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PRESS RELEASE

August 15, 2022
For Immediate Release
Plymouth & Turners Falls, MA

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Statewide “Honoring the Land” rally calls for protecting drinking water, forests from industrial solar, sand mining and other threats

The second annual Massachusetts “Honoring the Land” statewide rally was held Saturday, August 13 in Plymouth and Turners Falls. Dozens of groups supported the event which featured speakers, live music, and family activities for the general public to learn more about the threats facing our drinking water, forests and historic Native American sites. The state-wide rally was held simultaneously in two towns, Plymouth and in Turners Falls.

Melissa Ferretti, Chairwoman of the Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe opened the Plymouth event honoring the ancestral lands of the Wampanoag people. “If we take a second to remember how beautiful Mother Nature is, we might treat it differently,” said Dan Hannigan, Ferretti’s son and Herring Pond Wampanoag enrolled citizen.

“People are united by concern for our sole source [drinking water aquifer](#) and our love of our forests and communities,” said Meg Sheehan of the Community Land & Water Coalition based in Plymouth. “Seven towns rely on the sole source aquifer – that’s 150,000 people and growing. When we join together to raise awareness about how these precious resources are threatened, we can make a difference. We were thrilled so many people came together again to learn from our speakers and each other.”

Speaking at the event, John Mahoney, a member of the Plymouth Select Board said, “As we look around the country and neighboring South Shore communities we see dire water shortages everywhere. Sustainable, secure sources of clean water are the key to Plymouth’s future. We need to act now to avoid the mistakes that other communities and states continue to repeat.”

The rally highlighted some specific concerns:

- Large-scale industrial solar causing [clear-cutting of forests](#) and destruction of waterways and community character. Calling this “[solar gone wrong](#)”, [groups are advocating](#) for proper siting of solar, redirecting state subsidies, and [protecting municipal zoning power to control solar siting](#).
- Loss of prime [farmland](#) and cranberry bogs to large industrial solar that [undermines the livelihoods of local farmers](#) by taking away land for growing crops and threatening wetlands.
- Rampant and unregulated [rampant and unregulated sand mining](#) in Southeastern Massachusetts under the [ruse of cranberry bog agriculture](#) and other schemes.
- [Northfield Mountain pump storage power project](#) on the Connecticut River in Western Mass posing as clean energy harm the river and its ecology.
- [Logging on public lands](#) promoted by the state Energy & Environmental Affairs office, undermining efforts to mitigate climate change and biodiversity collapse.
- Loss of biodiversity and the [failure](#) of the state Department of Fish and Game to protect rare and endangered species in the [Atlantic Coastal Pine Barrens](#) and other areas

Janet Sinclair, co-founder of [Save Massachusetts Forests](#), one of the groups hosting the event described the focus of the event. “ We love the places where we live and are very aware of the value of our natural resources. There are specific ways that our land and water are being harmed, and we wanted to call attention to them, and offer people some simple actions that they can take if they want to.”

Northampton berry farmer Fred Beddall spoke at the Western Mass venue. He talked about the Connecticut River Valley [farmland as needing protection](#). “When you come to our farm you see a beautiful view of the Holyoke Range and a sign – it says, ‘We are still in Eden.’ It’s a quote from famous painter Thomas Cole, who painted the view of our valley called ‘The Oxbow.’ The view hasn’t changed in almost 200 years. It is still Eden.”

Professor of Applied Science at Trinity College, [Dr. Susan A. Masino](#), County Coordinator for the [Old Growth Forest Network](#), and coauthor of the seminal [paper on Proforestation](#) also spoke in Turners Falls. “Our land and water is our lifeline, now and forever. We need to stop and think about what we are doing and come together to develop common sense policies that ensure that our energy and resource needs are not damaging our lifeline. Right now only 1% of the land in Massachusetts has strong and permanent protection, and that puts everything at risk.”

Scientist and [speaker Dr. Bill Stubblefield](#) added, “Intact forests are critical allies in our struggle for a livable future as we face the looming threats of catastrophic climate change, accelerating extinction rates, and ecological collapse. We must also recognize that their value in this regard increases dramatically with both forest age and area.”

In Plymouth, Jerry Sheehan, Chairman of L. Knife of Kingston said, “We are honored to support the grassroots efforts of our community members in Southeastern Massachusetts working to protect our drinking water and forests. The 2022 Honoring the Land rally brings together people from all walks of life for this important cause.”

“We have had an incredibly successful year,” said Meg Sheehan. “Carver passed a [moratorium](#) on large solar and on the [Cranberry Point 150 megawatt battery storage facility](#) in a residential neighborhood by an 85% vote at Town Meeting. In Halifax, a [grassroots effort defeated the Morse Brothers Cranberry](#) sand and gravel mining project posing as construction of a new cranberry bog. Proposed ground-mounted solar projects that will destroy forests, waterways and Native American cultural sites in Wareham, Rochester and Carver are under intense scrutiny by our communities. We are demanding accountability and transparency from local officials reviewing these projects. There’s much work to do but our coalition is united and working together for clean water and our communities.”

The groups offered action items: a petition calling for a [moratorium](#) on state funding for ground mounted industrial solar larger than five acres unless it meets strict siting criteria, and [letter to the Department of Conservation and Recreation calling for state lands to be preserved as “Climate and Biodiversity Reserves”](#) to help mitigate climate change and better protect natural habitats.



Photo: 2021 Honoring the Land Rally, Wareham MA. Speakers David Weeden, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and Melissa Ferretti, Chair, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe

The events were co-hosted by Concerned Citizens of Franklin County, Save Massachusetts Forests, Save the Pine Barrens, and Community Land and Water Coalition. Many groups supported the event.

More information:

<https://www.savemassforests.com/>
<https://savethepinebarrens.org/>

